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ABSTRACT

The Illinois State Board of Education has demonstrated a concern for improving the representation of women and minorities in educational administration. Within the agency, this concern takes the form of policy statements, the hiring of a committed staff, agency self-evaluation, equal employment opportunity training for agency managers, and the provision of growth opportunities for women and minorities. The board also provides leadership to local education agencies by encouraging legislation, promulgating appropriate regulations, issuing formal resolutions supporting equal employment opportunity activities, offering management seminars, promoting support networks, and developing and disseminating useful resources. (Author/PGD)

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THE ROLE OF A STATE EDUCATION AGENCY IN PROMOTING THE ADVANCEMENT OF WOMEN IN SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION

Paper Presented to the Annual Meeting
of the
American Educational Research Association
Boston, Massachusetts

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at the
Symposium: Organizational Structures that Promote Women and Minorities in School Administration Careers

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INTRODUCTION

While a state education agency (SEA) is a governmental agency and not a professional organization in the usual sense, SEAs constantly interact with state and national professional associations--forming advocacy coalitions where possible, being adversaries on occasion. Like all reform movements, the promotion of women and minorities in school administration is a goal which brings out both advocacy and adversarial relationships within the profession.

SEA PRACTICES AND POLICIES

The Illinois State Board of Education has long demonstrated its concern about the inadequate representation of women and minorities in educational administration by taking specific actions designed to lessen the apparent inequities.

1. SUPPORT AND ACTION WITHIN THE SEA:

POLICY STATEMENTS. The Illinois State Board of Education in 1975 adopted the following Affirmative Action goal:

> The State Board of Education supports affirmative action. All positions of the Illinois State Board of Education shall be filled in a manner giving all people equal opportunity to recruitment and promotion.
>
> The Illinois State Board of Education shall take action to employ staff at all levels so that the representation of minorities and women reflects more closely that of the overall population.

STAFF TO SUPPORT COMMITMENT. The Illinois State Board of Education hired staff to assure that all individuals are afforded equal employment opportunity. The Personnel Manager previously served as a University Affirmative Action Officer. Our Affirmative Action Officer and our Title IX Coordinator are available to persons wishing to discuss and/or investigate instances of suspected discrimination. An Affirmative Action Committee established in 1974 offered support and guidance in agency efforts during the earlier years of focus on equal employment concerns; now a Personnel Council acts as a policy-making body around those issues.

AGENCY SELF-EVALUATION. State agencies under Title IX must assume responsibility for examining themselves. In Illinois, we are constantly monitoring ourselves and attempting to improve our status as an equal opportunity employer.

For example, in July of 1975, the Illinois State Board of Education's Sex Equity Task Force completed its first major project, which was the conduct of the state agency's Title IX self evaluation, an indepth study

of the SEA's policies and practices (both program and employment) that was publicized by the Education Commission of the States in their national newsletter. As a result of this study, some agency policies were significantly modified and several appropriate new policies were adopted.

Such a study of agency employment data includes race and sex variables in order to address the question of equal employment opportunities for women and minorities. In this case, the self evaluation led to more detailed examinations of specific areas such as tuition reimbursement for employees, agency job classifications composed of only one sex, underutilization of talents (usually female) at clerical levels (where degreed employees served in jobs not requiring academic degrees), dissemination of information regarding promotion and training opportunities, contract awards, committees composition, and obscure fringe benefits including use of agency vehicles and travel opportunities.

In April of 1978, the Sex Equity Task Force conducted an update to the 1976 report, assessing the current status of the Illinois State Board of Education with regard to sex equity and making further recommendations to the State Superintendent of Education for asserting the SEA's leadership role in providing equal opportunity.

The Sex Equity Task Force tells me that because the State Superintendent has made a public commitment to sex equity, he is more likely to hear about problems. This is natural and healthy. No reform can move quickly enough for the advocates, nor slowly enough for the conservers.

EEO TRAINING FOR AGENCY MANAGERS. Training for Illinois State Board of Education management has over the past several years included focus on issues of equal employment opportunity, with particular emphasis on the promotion of qualified women and minorities into higher administrative ranks. The agency has also participated in special training programs designed to develop leadership. Addressing the needs of people who may wish to move into management positions, the Illinois State Board of Education late last year volunteered to serve as a field test site for leadership training materials developed by the University of Cincinnati under funding by the Women's Educational Equity Act Program, requiring a commitment of agency funds as well as staff time. Some women managers were particularly interested in the module on "Power." Since many women have come to believe it untrue that the meek shall inherit the earth, they're looking for other avenues to power. Another example of training provided for agency personnel is the Educational Policy Fellowship Program. This program, funded by the Institute for Educational Leadership, George Washington University, involves state personnel with outstanding capabilities (especially women and minorities) in a year long study of policy making at state and federal levels.

GROWTH OPPORTUNITIES FOR WOMEN AND MINORITIES. One action that can be taken by SEA's to encourage the movement of women and minorities into administration is to provide them with opportunities for professional

growth. Illinois State Board of Education activities in support of its own talented aspiring women have included offering them responsibilities that provide both leadership experience and visibility within the agency.

As an example, the Illinois State Board of Education's Affirmative Action Committee was chaired by a woman manager. In addition, an agency task force (Sex Equity Task Force) was appointed by the State Superintendent of Education in January of 1976 with specific responsibilities regarding the elimination of sex discrimination in educational programs and employment. That task force is chaired by the agency Title IX Coordinator, who is female. This task force was responsible for the agency's comprehensive self-evaluation mentioned earlier. Every search and selection committee includes two or more women. The number of women in managerial positions from 1975 to 1978 rose from 9 to 26, a threefold increase.

2. LEADERSHIP TO LEA's:

LEGISLATION. The state agency assumed a leadership role in the creation of state legislation providing for equal opportunities for students and employees of both sexes in the common schools of Illinois. This piece of legislation (P.A. 79-597) became law in August of 1975, implementing guidelines were developed by the state agency, and agency school approval teams act as enforcers of the law in the course of their evaluation of schools for recognition status.

The state sex equity staff provides technical assistance to local districts around issues of employment equity as well as educational equity.

REGULATIONS. In its role as regulator of the statewide educational system, the state agency can develop and implement rules and regulations guaranteeing equal employment opportunity.

In 1971, the Illinois State Board of Education developed and adopted rules designed to eliminate and prevent racial segregation with respect to both employment and educational concerns. Our race desegregation personnel offer technical assistance in the application of these rules by local districts.

RESOLUTIONS ENDORSING EEO ACTIVITIES. The State Board of Education at its March 17, 1976, meeting resolved that the board would (1) support research efforts designed to identify the presence of women in administrative positions, to develop career ladders to these positions, to remove obstacles to employment, and to assess statewide curricular and extracurricular activities; and would (2) formally endorse cooperation between the Illinois State Board of Education and institutions of higher learning in presenting workshops on women's educational equity and further would recommend that the Joint Education Committee study the feasibility of further cooperative efforts in such areas as research, analysis of programs in educational administration, and curriculum development.

In line with those resolutions, since the mid 1970's, the Illinois State Board of Education has been involved in the funding or partial funding of several research efforts that examine the decline in the number of female administrators in Illinois schools, search for explanations, and recommend ways to reverse that trend. The most effective is a set of career guidance materials for the encouragement of junior high school students to consider careers other than in the traditional sex-stereotyped mold.

CREATION OF MANAGEMENT SEMINARS. The purpose is to increase opportunities for women in administration including education at all levels, government and industry. Two state-wide conferences financed by the SEA have focused on personal and professional development.

IWA has offered to help the other organizations--school administrators, principals and school board associations--plan their conference programs, fee structures, and membership structures (such as only allowing practitioners to join). This work has just begun.

In September, 1978, the State Superintendent convened eighteen female leaders in Illinois education to serve on an ad hoc Council for Women in Educational Administration, whose charge was to identify and examine causes for the declining number of female administrators and to recommend strategies that the state agency might initiate to reverse that trend. Immediately following the forming of the ad hoc Council, the state agency provided funds to support a statewide "Management Seminar Addressing the Special Needs of Women in Educational Administration." This 2-1/2 day seminar was held in November 1978 and was attended by some 200 female educators who were either currently acting in a management capacity or who were certified as administrators. The second annual conference was held in November, 1979, and was again attended by nearly 200 people.

DEVELOPMENT OF SUPPORT NETWORKS. A state agency can also actively encourage the development of support networks for aspiring administrators. Members of the Illinois State Superintendent's ad hoc Council presented to the November 1978 conference participants the opportunity to join in the founding of Illinois Women Administrators, Inc. (IWA). This organization, whose goal is to promote women in management, recruited a membership of some 500 as of November 1979, less than one year after its formation.

During the second annaul IWA conference in November 1979, members of the ad hoc Council completed their charge by presenting their report with recommendations to the State Superintendent of Education. At the State Superintendent's suggestion, representatives of the ad hoc council presented their report and recommendations to the State Board of Education in December, 1979. The report was assigned to the SBE Equal Educational Opportunity Committee for review and action.

REMINDERS TO LEA's. SEA's can provide reminders to local districts of our shared concern and responsibility. A letter from the Illinois State Superintendent to all local district superintendents in the fall of 1979

reminded practicing administrators of the declining representation of women in administration and urged them to actively work to reverse that trend. Not all recipients of the letter were especially pleased about our concern, but they received the message.

DEVELOP AND DISSEMINATE RESOURCES. Additional activities promoting women in administration have been and are being supported by the Illinois State Board of Education's Sex Desegregation Project. These activities include funding the development of a recruitment model, ("HIRE: Helping Illinois Recruit Educators"). This model is designed to facilitate and encourage local district effort to recruit women and men into positions nontraditional for their gender, e.g. women into administration. The process is generic and can be used in any state to assist school officials to, first, assess work force patterns and, then, to undertake management interventions to eliminate unnecessary and counterproductive barriers to equal employment opportunity.

State education agencies in the past may well have been part of the problem of sex discrimination. They stand at a pivotal point in the education communications structure. The Council of Chief State School Officers this year has a woman president. CCSSO and NASBE, the Association of State Boards (whose president last year was Adrienne Bailey of Illinois), have sought and received Federal Funds for awareness and training conferences for state board members and agency managers. It is quite possible for state education agencies therefore to become:

1. Model employers.

2. Sources of technical assistance to local educational agencies.

3. Sponsors of new networks of support to aspiring and incumbent women managers.